

KNOW THE DIOCESES IN 2020

ARCHDIOCESE of SYDNEY

The Catholic Church was first officially established in Australia when the Vicariate Apostolic of New Holland and Van Diemen's Land was erected in 1834. On 5 April 1842 the Vicariate was elevated to the Diocese of Sydney and, on the same day, parts of its territory were excised to establish the Vicariates Apostolic of Adelaide (later Diocese of Adelaide) and Hobart (later Diocese of Hobart). On 22 April 1842 the Diocese of Sydney was further elevated to Archdiocese and Metropolitan See of the Province of Sydney with two suffragan dioceses, Adelaide and Hobart. In 1845 it lost further territory in its western region for the establishment of the Diocese of Perth and the Vicariates Apostolic of Essington (later Diocese of Darwin) and King George Sound (later suppressed). Thereafter, it lost further territory for the erection of the dioceses of Maitland (in 1847), Melbourne (1847), Brisbane (1859), Goulburn (1862), Bathurst (1865), and Wollongong (1951). In 1986 the Archdiocese was further divided to establish the new dioceses of Broken Bay and Parramatta. Currently, it has 9 suffragan dioceses and together they form the Province of Sydney. For certain functions, the Archdiocese of Canberra & Goulburn works together with the Sydney Province. The land area of the Sydney Archdiocese is 1,042 sq. km.¹

Demographics: At the 2016 Census, 2,455,169 persons lived in the diocese, with 594,145 self-identifying as Catholic (24.2% of total). Since the 2001 Census (1,993,236 and 596,697 (27.5%)), the general population has increased by 23.2% while the Catholic population has decreased by 0.4% (-2,552). Catholic numbers peaked at 611,431 in 2011. In 2016 the diocese ranked 3rd in Australia's Catholic population with the median age of Catholics at 38 years. Australia is the birthplace of just 61.8% of the diocese's Catholics, including 5,992 indigenous Australians (1.0% of all Catholics in the diocese), while the biggest groups born outside Australia are from Italy (4.2%), Philippines (3.8%), Vietnam (2.3%), Lebanon and Iraq (each 2.0%), NZ and Other Oceania (1.8%), UK excluding Nth Ireland and Ireland (each 1.7%), Central America and Croatia/Former Yugoslavia (each 1.3%), Spain & Portugal (1.1%), Indonesia (1.0%), Korea (0.9%), Poland, India, China and Chile (each 0.8%), Malta and Brasil (each 0.7%) and Hong Kong, Colombia and other Middle East (each 0.6%). The male to female ratio is 91.0: 100.

Bishops: The present Archbishop is Anthony Fisher, born in Australia in 1960, ordained a priest for the Order of Preachers in 1991, and ordained a bishop in 2003. He previously served as an auxiliary bishop in the Sydney Archdiocese (2003-2010) and as the 3rd Bishop of Parramatta Diocese (2010-2014). He was installed as the 9th Archbishop of Sydney in 2014. The diocese has two auxiliary bishops: Terence Brady, born in Australia in 1947, ordained a priest for the Archdiocese of Sydney in 1983, and ordained a bishop in 2007; and Richard Umbers, born in New Zealand in 1971, ordained a priest for the Prelature of the Holy Cross and Opus Dei in 2002, and ordained a bishop in 2016.

Structure and Governance: At end-2020 the diocese had 133 parishes organised into 9 deaneries. Of these, 119 had one or more full-time priests in residence.² The Archbishop's Curia includes the Archbishop and both Auxiliary Bishops, the Vicar General and four laypeople (three men and one woman) – the Chancellor, the Executive Director of Administration and Finance, the Director of Evangelisation, and one further lay member. Extended Curia meetings include the Directors of Sydney Catholic Schools and CatholicCare. The diocese has 10 Episcopal Vicars (for 3 Regions as well as Health, Welfare and Social Justice, Evangelisation, Immigration, Clergy (two), Canonical Affairs and Education). A religious sister is the Archbishop's Delegate for Consecrated Life. There are 2 Tribunals (Sydney and Interdiocesan), 4 Agencies for Immigration, Liturgy, Aboriginal Catholic Ministry and Justice and Peace,³ and 3 Centres for Vocations, for Evangelisation, and for the Deaf (Ephpheta). The diocesan website details a Curia, a College of Consultors and Trustees, a Council of Priests, Council of Deans as well as an Archdiocesan Finance Council (including Property and Investment Committees). Thirteen diocesan synods were held between 1873 and 1951, but none since then. Two Councils of the Province of

¹ This is the land area according to the 2016 National Census Project (called Statistical Area 1's). Its land area is slightly larger than São Tomé and Príncipe (964 sq. Km.) and smaller than the Danish Faroe Islands (1,393 sq. Km.)

² Data from diocesan website: www.sydneycatholic.org

³ The Justice and Peace Office promotes awareness, understanding and action in relation to justice, peace, ecology and development as guided by Catholic Social Teaching.

Sydney were convened in 1844 (in Sydney) and 1869 (in Melbourne), but were both called Provincial Council of Australia. No diocesan assembly has ever been held and the current Archbishop has not established a diocesan pastoral council.

Priests and Deacons: At end-2020 the *Official Directory* listed 467 priests (including 4 bishops) living in or associated with the diocese: 218 diocesan and 249 religious. Of these 171 (including 3 bishops) were working in parish ministry, 58 (including 1 bishop) were living in retirement, 72 were ministering as full or part-time chaplains to 23 different ethnic communities, hospitals, aged care facilities, universities, corrective services, police and lay organisations. Another 11 were not resident in parishes, 5 were studying overseas, 10 were working outside the diocese, 8 were ministering in the seminaries, 8 were awaiting appointment, and 1 was on ministerial leave. At 7 August 2021 there were 171 priests (including 3 bishops) (36.6% of total) actively involved in parish ministry: 92 diocesan and 79 religious. Of these, 85 were Australian-born and 86 overseas-born. The overseas-born are from 31 different countries predominantly in Asia (41) and Europe (17), while smaller numbers are from Africa (9), the Americas (7), Middle East (2) and Oceania (5). Of the 49 Australian-born diocesan priests in parish ministry, 14 were ordained in 1980 or prior and will retire in the next 10 years making it likely that the diocese's already significant reliance on overseas-born priests will further increase. Since 2017 just 10 new diocesan priests have been ordained for the diocese, including 4 overseas-born. At end-2020 the diocese had 38 seminarians preparing for the priesthood, including many born overseas, as well as 14 permanent deacons, almost all working in parish ministry or chaplaincy. The diocese has a Directorate of the Permanent Diaconate.

Seminary and Seminarians: The Seminary of the Good Shepherd in Sydney, established in 1996, offers a formation program for candidates for the diocesan priesthood to all dioceses in NSW, continuing the tradition of the earlier major seminary, St Patrick's College, at Manly. Academic studies are undertaken at the Catholic Institute of Sydney. At end-2020 the diocese had 38 seminarians preparing for priesthood and the most recent ordinations were in 2020 (4 candidates). The Mater Redemptoris Archdiocesan Missionary Seminary, established by the NeoCatechumenal Way, also operates in the diocese, preparing predominantly overseas-sourced seminarians for mission ministry in Australia and overseas. The diocese has a Vocations Centre.

Lay ministers and officials: At end-2020, 38 lay persons held responsible positions in the diocesan curia: 22 men, 14 women and 2 religious sisters. No lay persons are listed as pastoral associates or similar in parishes, but 16 lay persons minister in corrective services, ethnic communities, hospitals, universities and Port of Sydney as chaplains, pastoral associates, and pastoral carers. They include 8 lay men, 4 lay women, 3 religious sisters and 1 religious brother. The first religious sisters – Sisters of Charity - arrived in Sydney in 1838, and the first religious brothers – Christian Brothers - arrived in 1843. Both groups came from Ireland. Today, 83 congregations of religious sisters and 6 of religious brothers minister in Sydney in education, health, welfare and pastoral care. The combined number of religious brothers and sisters peaked at 3,786 in 1968, but 2 decades later had fallen to 2,568, and continues to fall. Since 2001 the number of religious sisters has decreased by 43.8% (from 1,310 to 736 in 2020) and the number of religious brothers by 29.6% (from 260 to 183 in 2020). At present, across Australia, with rare exceptions, there are few young religious sisters and brothers in ministry.⁴

Mass attendance and liturgy: In 2006 the typical weekend Mass attendance in the diocese was 103,310 (17.4% of all Catholics). In 2016 the typical weekend attendance was 93,365 (15.7%) – down 9.6% (9,945). Each priest active in parish ministry currently ministers to an estimated average 542 regular Mass attenders. The diocese has a Liturgical Commission and Liturgy Office.

Pastoral ministries: Most of the pastoral ministry in the diocese is carried out in the parishes by priests, permanent deacons and lay volunteers. The diocese has a Centre for Evangelisation, established in 2020 to support the parishes, migrant chaplaincies and other Eucharistic communities. Under the Diocesan Mission Plan *Go Make Disciples* launched in 2020 the Parish Renewal Team works with the priests,

⁴ A 2015 study of 93 religious congregations of men and women, with a total membership of 4,427, representing 64 per cent of all religious in Australia, found that only 4% of the women and 11% of the men in the participating congregations were aged under 45 years at the time of the survey. <https://ncpr.catholic.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/CVMA-Report-Final-report-Feb-2018.pdf> One exception is the Dominican Sisters of St Cecilia in the Sydney Archdiocese, whose age profile runs counter to this trend.

parishes and communities to support the call to discipleship. The Plan's 5 foundations are Evangelisation, Leadership, Community, Formation, and Worship.⁵ Significant pastoral ministry is also provided by 90 priests, deacons, religious and lay chaplains to ethnic communities, hospitals, prisons, residential aged care, universities, police, and lay Catholic organisations. A special Aboriginal Catholic Ministry (ACM) in the diocese promotes reconciliation and mutual understanding, and provides pastoral care of Catholic Aborigines as well as counselling services and access to education. Sydney Catholic Youth works with young people in parishes and schools as well as through organised events, seeking to evangelise them through an encounter with Christ, to equip them as leaders, and to raise their hearts and minds to God. The Life, Marriage and Family team provides parish-based marriage and family support. The Mustard Seed Bookshop, the official diocesan bookstore and part of the Centre for Evangelisation, retails Catholic books, merchandise and resources for catechists and those seeking greater knowledge of Scripture and Tradition. The Confraternity of Christian Doctrine (CCD) trains catechists and provides religious education and Christian formation for Catholic children in government (public) schools. Currently, there are over 400 catechists teaching 28,000 children in 400 government schools.

Ecumenism and Inter-Faith: The diocese has a Commission for Ecumenism and Interfaith Relations, established to foster unity among the Christian churches, to build harmonious relations between peoples of different faith traditions, and to ensure that Ecumenism and Inter-religious dialogue is an organic part of diocesan life. It generates resources, cooperates with other Christians in prayer and good works, tries to build bridges of understanding and co-operation between people of all religions, motivates Catholics to work actively towards full visible unity, fosters a deep appreciation of the unique bond between Jews and Christians, and works with other similar Commissions nationally and internationally. Since 2010 the Archbishop of Sydney has hosted the IFTAR Breakfast where leaders of Christian churches and other religious faiths come together in friendship and brotherhood.

Plenary Council: A total of 11,791 persons in the diocese – 1,103 as individuals (49% women and 34% men) and 10,688 in 447 groups – responded to the Plenary Council's Listening and Dialogue phase. They identified the top 10 priority issues for the Council as: greater inclusion of all; greater trust, faith and hope in God; greater focus on Jesus Christ; a new model of church, diocese and parish; fighting for human rights issues; outreach to youth; ending mandatory celibacy and allowing priests to marry; greater emphasis on prayer and sacraments; a greater role for women; and teaching authentic Catholic faith.⁶ Twelve persons from the diocese were selected for the Discernment and Writing Groups (6 men and 6 women, including the Archbishop), and 21 persons from the diocese have been called to participate in the Council sessions: 4 bishops, 1 vicar general, 3 episcopal vicars (priests), 2 seminary rectors (priests), 2 university presidents, 4 deans of university faculties, and 5 lay persons (Mrs Francise Pirola, Ms Selina Hasham, Prof. Hayden Ramsay, Mr Christopher Lee and Mr Gabriele Turchi).

Education: The first Catholic school in Australia was established in Sydney (at Parramatta) in 1820. At end-2020 there were 166 Catholic schools in the diocese: 114 primary, 41 secondary, 9 combined, and 2 special. They were educating 86,225 students: 41,810 primary and 44,415 secondary. Sydney Catholic Schools (SCS), working to its *2018-2020 New Horizons* strategic plan, has managed and administered 150 of the schools (primary and secondary) organised into 13 networks. It provides over 70,000 students with a high-quality, low fee Catholic education as well as professional development and support to some 10,700 full and part-time staff, over 80% of whom are women and 0.32% Indigenous.⁷ The SCS *2020 Annual Report* shows total income for the year was \$1,089 million with \$859 million derived from government grants. A total of \$157 million was spent on refurbishments, construction and land purchases for future schools.⁸ Of all Catholic children of school age in 2016, 57.6% were attending Catholic primary schools (4th highest rate of all dioceses), while 62.8% were attending Catholic secondary schools (highest rate of all dioceses).⁹ SCS works closely with Catholic Schools New South Wales Ltd (CSNSW) which, since 2017, has coordinated and represented Catholic education in NSW and the ACT at a state level. The 11 Bishop Ordinaries of NSW are its members. While each

⁵ [Home - Go Make Disciples](#)

⁶ <https://plenarycouncil.catholic.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Diocesan-Final-Report-Phase-1-Sydney.pdf>

⁷ Indigenous Catholics in the Sydney Archdiocese number 5,592 and constitute 1% of all Catholics.

⁸ <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1tPUG-dSGmghJVwkl7XZJAD-3C-LkPD8E/view>

⁹ ACBC, NCP, *Diocesan Social Profile, Based on 2016 Australian Census: Diocese of Sydney*, Canberra, September 2019.

bishop has responsibility for the Catholic School Agency (CSA) in his diocese, collectively these agencies are recognised by governments as the NSW Catholic school system and as the representative body for NSW Catholic schools. The CSNSW Board receives and distributes government funding to diocesan Catholic schools for their day-to-day operations and capital works, ensures that schools and agencies are government-compliant, provides policy advice and direction, reports to the Bishops, fosters resource collaboration and efficiency, and promotes and advocates for Catholic education in NSW. In 2020 the NSW Catholic school system received \$2.8 billion in lump sum grants from State and federal governments which CSNSW allocated to the 11 dioceses according to a transparent and publicly available 'needs-based' model. The separate dioceses allocate the funds on their own needs-based model (not publicly available) to individual schools. Catholic tertiary education within the diocese is provided by the University of Notre Dame, the Australian Catholic University (2 campuses at North Sydney and Strathfield), the Catholic Institute of Sydney, and 2 residential colleges (Sancta Sophia and St John's) at the University of Sydney. Sydney Catholic Early Childhood Services (SCECS) caters for children and families from the local Catholic schools and communities and also operates Outside School Hours Care and Early Childhood services at several Catholic schools and parishes within the diocese.

Health and Welfare Services: Several Catholic agencies provide health and welfare services within the diocese. The principal welfare provider is CatholicCare, an agency established in the 1940s to lead and assist the Sydney Catholic community "in works of love and charity" and to support those who are vulnerable or in need. With 570 staff (77% female) and 150 volunteers it currently delivers a broad range of services for children, families, and young and aged persons. Its annual income to 30 June 2020 was \$44.5 million including government and program grants of \$29.1 million.¹⁰ Twelve other organisations also provide welfare services, including St Vincent de Paul, St John of God, Good Shepherd, the Dunlea Centre, and St Anthony's Family Care. Health services are also provided by many organisations including the Sisters of Charity who operate the Sacred Heart Hospice and 4 hospitals, and the Little Company of Mary and St John of God who each operate one hospital. In the last 25 years there has been a significant increase in the proportion of Catholics in the diocese aged 65 years and over: from 12.5% in 1996 to 16.4% in 2016. In response, many Catholic organisations have provided much-needed aged accommodation facilities, including the Little Company of Mary, Trustees of Catholic Aged Care, St Vincent's Care Services, Catholic Health Australia, the Daughters of Charity, the Little Sisters of the Poor, and Scalabrini Village Ltd (for the Italian elderly).

Finances: The diocese does not publish an annual financial report. It is registered with the Charities Commission (ACNC) as Trustees of the Roman Catholic Church for the Archdiocese of Sydney together with several other diocesan entities including Sydney Catholic Schools, the Catholic Development Fund, and Aboriginal Catholic Ministry. As a 'Basic Religious Charity' the diocese is not required to answer the financial questions in the Annual Information Statement, submit annual financial reports, or comply with any Governance Standards. However the *2020 Annual Financial Report* of Aboriginal Catholic Ministry is available on the ACNC website. The diocese has its own Catholic Development Fund (CDF), the financial key to the future growth of the diocese providing finance for the diocese's capital and other works, as well as a range of financial products and services for the parishes, schools and agencies. It supports diocesan ministry in evangelisation, liturgy, Justice and Peace, ecumenism, the Seminary of the Good Shepherd, and parishes. The CDF's *2020 Annual Financial Report* shows total assets of \$1,011.3 million (deposits of \$936.8 million), net assets of \$66.5 million, and a surplus for the year of \$19.8 million.¹¹ Loans and advances to diocesan entities was \$589.7 million.

Communications: The diocesan Communications and News Media team is located within the Centre for Evangelisation. Its principal work, besides maintaining the diocesan website, is the production of *The Catholic Weekly*, the official print and online magazine of the Archdiocese. Projecting itself as counter-cultural and in favour of life, it seeks to engage the general public and the mainstream media. Its content includes news and opinion articles on faith and parenting, regular supplements on different subjects, and stories on parishes, chaplaincies and other Eucharistic communities. It is distributed to parishes, schools, universities, aged care facilities, hospitals, and other institutions across Australia and internationally. The diocese's digital and social media platforms include Facebook, Twitter, Soundcloud and Vimeo (for

¹⁰ *CatholicCare 2020 Annual Report*, pp. 36-40

¹¹ [Financial Statements \(sydneycdf.org.au\)](https://www.sydneycdf.org.au/financial-statements)

regular broadcasts of the Eucharist). The diocesan official bookstore, The Mustard Seed, located in the city, stocks an extensive range of Catholic books, resources and merchandise.

Safeguarding and Child Sexual Abuse: The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse identified the Sydney Archdiocese as a significant setting of abuse. It found the diocese to have the 14th highest overall proportion of priests (7.0%) who were alleged perpetrators, taking into account the duration of ministry.¹² Its June 2017 Analysis of Claims states that 169 claims were made against the diocese, with 84 payments made for a total of \$17.2 million (average \$204,000 per payment).¹³ The Sisters of Mercy in North Sydney also had claims made against them (no details given). The Royal Commission conducted several Case Studies examining institutional responses in the Sydney Archdiocese: Case Study 4 (Towards Healing), Case Study 8 (Mr John Ellis), Case Study 13 (Marist Brothers), and Case Study 31 (Bishop Geoffrey Robinson).¹⁴ In response to recommendations from the Royal Commission, the Office of Safeguarding and Ministerial Integrity was established in 2015 to raise awareness on collective responsibility to protect the safety, well-being and dignity of children, young people and vulnerable adults, to prevent their abuse, and to respond swiftly and compassionately where children are harmed or at risk of being harmed. It also develops and delivers training programmes on Safeguarding protocols and procedures. While the diocese currently follows the *Towards Healing* protocol, during 2021 it will transition to the new *National Response Protocol* adopted by the ACBC in November 2020.¹⁵ The diocese is one of a total of 330 diocesan entities that are registered participants in the National Redress Scheme as part of Australian Catholic Redress Limited.¹⁶

Table 1: Statistical data for Sydney Archdiocese: 2001, 2006, 2011, 2016, 2020 and 2021

	2001	2006	2011	2016	2020	2021 at 29 August	Change 2001 to 2020
Total Population (at Census)	1,993,236	2,085,297	2,223,104	2,455,169			+23.2%*
Catholic Population (at Census) (% of Total)	596,697 (27.5%)	594,700 (28.5%)	611,431 (27.5%)	594,145 (24.2%)			-2552* -0.4%*
Number of Parishes	137	141	138	136	135	133	-1.5%
Diocesan priests	215	249	222	238	218	218	+6.0%
Religious priests	265	232	275	252	249	249	-6.0%
Total Priests	480	481	497	490	467	467	-0.6%
Priests in active parish ministry (% of Total Priests)			169 (34.0%)		171 (36.1%)	171 (36.6%)	+1.2%**
- Australian-born - % in active parish ministry			104 (61.5%)		83 (48.5%)	85 (49.7%)	-18.3%**
- Overseas-born - % in active parish ministry			65 (38.5%)		89 (51.5%)	86 (50.3%)	+32.3%**
Parishes with full-time resident priest % of parishes			114 (82.6%)		118 (87.4%)	119 (89.5%)	+4.4%**
Catholics per priest in parish ministry			3,617		3,454 (est).		
Permanent deacons	4	5	5	7	14	14	+250%
Religious Sisters	1,310	1,058	1,156	851	736		-43.8%
Religious Brothers	260	278	209	175	183		-29.6%
Diocesan Seminarians	11	43	41	42	38		+245.5%
Diocesan Pastoral Council in operation		No	No	No	No	No	
Last Diocesan Synod (Diocesan Assembly)	1951 (Never)	1951 (Never)	1951 (Never)	1951 (Never)	1951 (Never)	1951 (Never)	
Diocesan Pastoral Plan in place					Yes	Yes	
Catholic schools	172	164	164	166	166		-3.5%
Students in Catholic schools	78,499	78,240	79,279	85,075	86,225		+9.8%
Hospitals	8	6	6	6	7		-12.5%)
Aged Care Accommodation Facilities	32	72	109	115	22		-31.3%
Typical weekend Mass attendance (% of all Catholics)		103,310 (17.4%)	98,308 (16.1%)	93,365 (15.7%)			-9,945*** -9.6%***

¹² [CARC.0050.025.0001.pdf \(childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au\)](https://www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/CARC.0050.025.0001.pdf)

¹³ Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, *Analysis of Claims of Child Sexual Abuse Made with Respect to Catholic Church Institutions*, June 2017. <https://www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/sites/default/files/CARC.0050.025.0001.pdf>

¹⁴ [Case studies | Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse \(childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au\)](https://www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/casestudies)

¹⁵ [file \(catholic.org.au\)](https://www.catholic.org.au)

¹⁶ https://www.nationalredress.gov.au/institutions/search?search_api_views_fulltext=catholic+diocese+of+sydney

Sources: *Official Catholic Directory* for 2002/03, 2007/08, 2012/17.413, 2016/17, 2020/21, 2021/22 (Data is accurate at 31 December of the previous year, namely, 2001, 2006, 2011, 2016, 2019 and 2020; diocesan website at 30 January 2021; ACBC, PRO, *Mass Attendance in Australia*, September 2008; ACBC, PRO, *Mass Attendance in Australia: A Critical Moment*, December 2013; ACBC, NCPR. 2016 *National Count of Attendance – National Summary*, Pastoral Research Online, Edition 44, April 2019. Notes: * Change from 2001-2016; ** 2011 to 2021; *** Change from 2006 to 2016

Sources:

Sydney diocesan website: [Catholic Archdiocese of Sydney \(sydneycatholic.org\)](http://sydneycatholic.org)

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[Catholic Professional Standards | Church Reports \(cpsltd.org.au\)](http://catholicprofessionalstandards.org.au)

<https://www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/sites/default/files/CARC.0050.025.0283.pdf>

Charities Commission: <https://www.acnc.gov.au/tools/topic-guides/basic-religious-charities>

2020 Annual Progress Report on Implementation of the Recommendations from the Final Report of the Royal

Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse: [FINAL Catholic Church Annual Report to NOCS.pdf - Google Drive](#)

Text and table prepared by Peter J Wilkinson (August 2021)

Note: This draft profile of the Archdiocese was forwarded to Archbishop Fisher with an invitation to correct any errors and to advise of any recent changes made or future plans being contemplated in relation to the recommendations in *The Light from the Southern Cross*. A response was received with corrections, additions and updates and these have all been incorporated into the revised text and table.